

Earlier this week, Rep. Mike Quigley delivered a speech calling for a national energy plan during an event hosted by the [Clean Energy Trust](#) in Chicago. The following are excerpts from his prepared remarks.

Quigley has been a stalwart supporter of environmental protections and oil dependency reduction, speaking out on [rising gas prices and the cost of foreign oil](#) and demanding [greater disclosure and transparency](#) before the construction of oil and gas pipelines. In 2011, Rep. Quigley reiterated his support for [strong EPA regulation authority](#) and protection of public health by voting against anti-regulatory, anti-environment legislation.

When you win a special election, as I did in 2009, there is no driver's manual, no crash course or tutorial you can sign up for online. You simply receive your Congressional pin, you're given your predecessor's old office, and sometimes even their staff, and you're told to go vote.

When I arrived in Washington and began putting my own office together, the resources at my disposal were astounding, and remain so, today.

We've got our own Congressional Research Service. I can call any number of experts in any field – the brightest, most well-known, highest achieving professionals and academicians in the world – and they will come in and brief me and my staff on issues coming before Congress.

Which makes it even more astounding, when I stand before you today, to tell you how bad it truly is.

Forget global warming; I serve with members who believe that dinosaurs were figments of our imagination despite overwhelming scientific agreement on the subject. I serve in the same chamber as folks who have serious doubts about the laws of gravity.

So, as an active believer in the tenants of conservation - reduce, reuse, recycle – as a member who bikes to most of my meetings both at home in Chicago and while in Washington DC, and as a father, husband, biker, vegetarian, opponent of “drill baby drill” and believer that global warming *IS* real, I can tell you:



Rep. Quigley has been a Sierra Club member since high school and has kept energy and the environment one of his top priorities in Congress.

It's bad.

The only way forward is to establish a national energy plan, something this great nation has always lacked, and to work with businesses and conservationists alike to get this done.

We must craft a plan that focuses on working with the business community, hand-in-hand, to be competitive internationally. We must craft a plan that focuses on public transportation and green infrastructure. We must craft a plan that focuses on conservation, as demonstrated so adeptly by our own President's increase in CAFE standards earlier this year. And, we must – *w e must*
– be creative.

As a high school student, I joined the Sierra Club, and today, I still carry my card to prove it. I went on to college, I then completed a master's program, procured a law degree and spent seven years teaching environmental policy while serving on the Cook County board. While a member of the board, I earned the moniker "greenest elected official" in Chicago, no small feat knowing the city's great green accomplishments over the past years. Even now, during weekends at home in Chicago, I spend a lot of my time doing restoration work in our local Forest Preserves because, well, the environment is important to me.

I have a personal energy plan. I reduce, reuse and recycle. I have an energy plan. Our great nation, however, does not.

But, of all the things our national energy plan must be, let me also tell you what it can't be.

In Congress today, you'll hear many members talking about how a family creates and adheres to a budget. It's a narrative that's built around the idea that if a family can come together and decide what their priorities are every month, and where they can spend a little less or a little more, then the federal government needs to write and adhere to such a plan themselves.

The same idea follows when it comes to energy. Unfortunately, for many in Washington, the "plan" is to completely deregulate the energy industry.

Our plan should not, and quite simply cannot, be blind deregulation. True, eliminating inefficiencies and duplicative layers of government is a good idea – that should be the easy part to agree on.

As the President said earlier this year, we must reform our government so that it "meets the demands of our time." Demands which certainly include attention to the threats imposed by global warming. He continued to espouse "making our government more responsive, strategic and leaner," something I think we can all get behind.

But, if you want to look to deregulation as your answer to all our country's ills, then I ask you to consider deregulation at the Federal, State or local level. The next time you get on a commuter

airplane, imagine, without regulations, how much sleep has that pilot had? The next time you eat a turkey sandwich, imagine, without regulations, what chemicals were used to raise and produce the turkey you're eating? The next time you breathe, imagine, without the Clean Air Act, how much ozone am I ingesting, and will I get asthma?

Demonizing smart regulations is not the way forward.

Specifically, if you want to understand why unabashed deregulation of the energy industry is a bad idea, look no further than California's energy crisis in 2000. Four years prior, in 1996, the California General Assembly passed a bill that would, at least partially, deregulate California energy. The energy-deregulation measure was based on the theory that the regulated monopolies lacked market incentives to control costs and innovate, and that it was necessary to break them up and create competitive markets.

The combination of a few key factors, including the deregulation plan, led to unprecedented wholesale power prices by the winter of 2000. On top of that, predicted investments in new power plants following deregulation failed to take place while cutbacks in funding for utility energy efficiency programs reduced the surplus of power supplies that existed in years prior.

Sounds awfully reminiscent to the economic trials and tribulations we've faced in the past years of boom, boom, boom – the bubble burst – and here we are today, still recovering from the devastating “bust.” Not to mention, Enron's price-manipulation that hammered the nail in the coffin for the California blackout crisis.

Today, experts are warning us that this drought – the worst we've seen since the 1950s – could yield us the same blackout results if we're not careful. We must learn from our mistakes, and importantly, we must listen to environmental queues, like severe weather, that tell us that the climate change crisis is nearing a fever pitch.

I previously mentioned the plan of those in Congress who seek to tackle today's problems by opening the faucet wider. More drilling, less regulation by agencies. More extraction and excavation of mountaintops, less adherence or respect for the tenants of the Clean Air and Water Acts. More funding cuts, fewer national parks, forests, wild rivers and heritage areas.

One out of every five votes we've taken this Congress has been a vote aimed at undermining environmental protection. That equals out to one vote per day, targeting the Environmental Protection Agency and our ability to protect and preserve our air, land and water.

This gets us to an important part – what our national energy plan *should* be.

Eliminating or changing rules and regulations because you believe they're too burdensome and restrictive can actually have a burdensome and restrictive effect to an industry's ability to stay afloat, to stay profitable.

So too, can a reluctance or refusal to engage in new market development. China and India got the message. They saw that renewable energy was, at its core, a way to make money, to capitalize on changing times.

Flash forward to 2011: China provided over half the solar panel cells in the U.S., that's over 3.1 billion dollars within our domestic market, 3.1 billion dollars we could be capitalizing on, infusing small and mid-sized solar companies across the country, creating and retaining green jobs. That's great news: the market is there.

In India in 2009, the government realized the benefits of promoting renewable energy. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy launched a "National Biomass Cookstove Initiative" to provide clean cooking options for the people of India. Rural solar home lighting systems have since been created and applied nation-wide to more than 435,000 homes. Now 700,000 solar lanterns are in use, and 7,000 solar-powered water pumps have been active in the years since the Ministry made renewable energy their goal. What once was a foreign, unrealized idea is now standard practice.

Times are ripe for exploration, development and a larger U.S. presence in the international renewable energy market, but it is up to us.

First, it's up to Congress to pass and extend renewable and clean energy tax credits. One of the most effective ways to promote renewable energy is through tax incentives that allow clean energy technologies to compete with fossil fuels that have been subsidized for decades.

If you're looking for good news, look no further than the success story that is the production tax credit, or PTC, for wind energy. Over the last four years, the U.S. wind industry has attracted an average of 17 billion dollars in private investment annually. According to recent reports, with the PTC in place, the wind industry is projected to create 54,000 American jobs in the next four years, including 46,000 manufacturing jobs. This rate of growth would keep the industry on track to support 500,000 jobs by 2030.

However, if Congress allows the PTC for wind to expire, as it is set to do at the end of this year, the report finds that private investment in the industry would drop by nearly two-thirds and nearly half of current wind industry jobs would be lost.

But this patchwork approach of nearing the expiration of valuable a tax credit, and often letting them expire or only extending for short term; of following sustainability recommendations for buildings, roads and public transportation only when it's convenient; of allowing fear, uncertainty and doubt to cloud a business decision based around standing laws and regulations being promulgated by agencies like the EPA who are carrying out the rules of the Clean Air and Water Acts, they are just a few of the reasons we must establish a national energy plan. A way forward, that takes everything into account.

We can't drill our way out of high gas prices, and believe me, this country has tried. For eight years, under the Bush Administration, the number of oil leases on public lands almost tripled. It didn't help gas prices, which doubled in 2008, and it didn't make us energy independent. We currently use 25 percent of the world's oil, but domestically, have less than 3 percent of the world's oil reserves.

Just look at Canada – they produce about one million barrels more than they consume daily, and have almost ten times more proved resources than we do. But it doesn't matter – price spikes at the pump there mirror ours.

As then-Representative Dick Cheney said in 1986, after introducing a bill to impose a tax on

imported oil, “Let us rid ourselves of the fiction that low oil prices are somehow good for the United States.” We can’t dip into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, or SPR, from time to time, and cross our fingers that OPEC won’t retaliate if we increase our global exports. If diverted to the market, scheduled deliveries of oil to the SPR annually would represent less than 1% of U.S. demands for oil.

We can’t blame the Obama Administration’s policies for the actions of speculators who are manipulating energy markets with no real interests except making money. Experts, including oil industry officials and investment firms, estimate that excessive oil speculation could be inflating prices by up to 30%. But, increasing domestic drilling would impact prices only by about 1%, and then only after a decade or more.

So, instead of suggesting fragmented projects that will put our public health at risk, it’s time to get work. In Congress, though it may feel to me some days that I’m fighting the good fight on my own, I’m surrounded by some of the original environmentalists.

Henry Waxman, now Ranking-Member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act in 2009 while serving as Chairman. This measure established an unprecedented national renewable energy standard and a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emissions. It’s a huge step toward a national energy plan. True, the bill didn’t pass the Senate, but lest I stand here sounding like the sky is falling, I am in no way diminishing the work that has established a foundation for us to truly make change.

In the Senate, Mr. Bingaman recently introduced clean energy standard legislation that requires large power companies to supply increasing amounts of electricity from low-carbon sources like wind, solar, nuclear and natural gas. Yes, today, the bill does have an uphill climb. But, that doesn’t mean we’re going to stop fighting.

We are not confined by yesterday’s struggles. We are not defined by today’s set-backs. And, we are not one-dimensional, with limited options and only a narrow path to forge. The future may not look how we believed it would. But I am confident it can be even better.

Through determined collaboration, investments in academic development, partnerships of

unlikely allies and unique views of the world ahead, a national energy plan can be forged.

A national energy plan must incorporate the voices of those who hold the pillars of environmentalism close to their heart: the reduce, reuse, recycle believers of the world, like myself. But, this national energy plan also desperately needs the small businesses, the start-ups, the clean energy technology developers and the corporate commitment that makes American industry great. No voice is too small, no voice more important than the other.

As I think back on my first days in Congress, no one could have prepared me for the cavernous divides between the individual policy beliefs of many of my colleagues.

The road ahead will be tough. But, when I think of the things the body has accomplished, I am emboldened to continue the fight. The 5th Congressional District of Illinois has been the home to many colorful and storied Members of Congress.

Dan Rostenkowski, the illustrious former Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, was at odds with President Reagan in 1988. They butted heads on what might seem insurmountable tasks – saving Medicare and Social Security, amidst a partisan atmosphere in Washington. "The heart of any negotiated agreement is living up to all aspects of the agreement, not just the parts you favor," the Illinois Democrat said in a letter to former-Budget Director James Miller.

As we know today, Medicare and Social Security persevere, much to the credit of those two very different public servants. Though some days may seem to prove otherwise and though the news may demonstrate our inability to "work" in Washington, we are not through, we will not fold our hand and cash our chips.

So on those long days when I question Congressional resolve, and purpose, I quietly remember the long and winding road toward progress this body has seen. And I believe that our record will reflect a commitment to conservation that has protected and preserved the land, air and water we have loved.

After all, as John F. Kennedy said in 1963 in an Address to American University in Washington, “In the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.”